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WASHINGTON - STANFELD TURNER, FORMER CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY DIRECTOR, DISCLOSED WEDNESDAY THAT DURING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION THE AGENCY SOUGHT WAYS TO OVERTHROW NOT ONLY IRAN'S AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI, BUT LIBYA'S MUHAMMAR KHADAFY, CUBA'S FIDEL CASTRO AND NICARAGUA'S SANDINISTA REGIME.

AS CIA DIRECTOR, ADMIRAL TURNER NEVER SENT SUCH A PLAN TO THE WHITE HOUSE - BUT THAT WAS BECAUSE HE FOUND "NO WAY" PRACTICALLY TO OUST THOSE LEADERS.

"THERE IS NOTHING MORALLY WRONG WITH TRYING TO OVERTHROW A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT BY COVERT MEANS," HE SAID. BUT HE OBJECTED TO CURRENT CIA INVOLVEMENT IN NICARAGUA BECAUSE "WE'VE GIVEN THE IMPRESSION WE'RE TRYING TO PUT A DICTATOR BACK IN."

"IF HE HAD A KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR," THAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT, HE WENT ON. BUT IN SUPPORTING VETERANS OF THE DEFEATED SOMOZA GOVERNMENT, "WE DON'T APPEAR TO BE BACKING AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE" TO THE SANDINISTAS.

TURNER EXPRESSED DISAPPROVAL OF A NEW, SECRET U.S. ARMY INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION REPORTED IN WEDNESDAY'S PAPERS. "ONE OF THE MAJOR INTELLIGENCE ISSUES THE COUNTRY FACES IS GETTING THE PENTAGON TO UNDERSTAND IT CAN'T HAVE ALL INTELLIGENCE RESOURCES UNDER ITS CONTROL," HE ADDED.

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE ARMY'S INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT ACTIVITY (ISA) "DID NOT EXIST AS FAR AS I KNOW DURING MY TENURE." THIS APPEARED TO CONTRADICT SOURCES WHO SAID THE UNIT WAS ESTABLISHED DURING THE IRANIAN HOSTAGE CRISIS IN 1980, THE LAST YEAR OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION.

BACKED BY A 31-YEAR NAVY CAREER BEFORE HIS FOUR YEARS AT CIA, TURNER TOLD REPORTERS AT BREAKFAST THAT "THE MILITARY DOESN'T FIT WELL INTO THE COVERT ACTIVITY ROLE IT IS NOT THE ORGANIZATION TO DO HUMAN INTELLIGENCE."

THE ARMY'S ISA IS SAID TO BE ACTIVE IN EL SALVADOR AND IN SUPPORT OF GUERRILLAS OPPOSING THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT. IN THE BEGINNING IT REPORTEDLY OPERATED WITHOUT CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION AND WITHOUT FORMAL AWARENESS BY EITHER THE CIA OR THE DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.

IT IS ALREADY KNOWN FROM EARLIER REPORTS THAT THIS COUNTRY TRIED TO FIND MEANS TO REPLACE AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI AS ONE WAY OF FREEING THE CAPTIVES IN IRAN.

THUS HIS DISCLOSURE THAT UNDER HIM THE CIA EXPLORED WAYS TO OUST HIM WAS NOT SURPRISING. BUT THE AGENCY HAS NOT PUBLICIZED ANY EFFORTS DURING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TO GET RID OF KHADAFY, CASTRO AND THE SANDINISTAS.

TURNER DID NOT SPECULATE ON WHAT REASONS WERE CONSIDERED, OR SPECIFICALLY WHY THEY WERE REJECTED. HE DID SAY THAT IN LIEYA: "NOT ENOUGH BASE" EXISTED FOR COVERT ORGANIZATION AMONG THE GOVERNMENT OR MILITARY.

ALTHOUGH SECRET EFFORTS TO MURDER OR OTHERWISE DEPOSE CASTRO DURING THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION HAVE BECOME WELL KNOWN; NO ONE HAS DISCLOSED THAT ANY THOUGHT WAS GIVEN TO TOPPLING HIS GOVERNMENT DURING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION.

+++: THE LEFTIST SANDINISTAS TOPPLED THE GOVERNMENT OF ANASTASIO SOMOZA IN MID-1979; AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF UNITED STATES AID WAS SENT TO HELP THE COUNTRY RECOVER FROM CIVIL WAR; EVEN AS THE NEW REGIME EMPHASIZED ITS TIES WITH CUBA.

ALTHOUGH THE CIA IS REQUIRED BY LAW TO INFORM CONGRESS OF ITS COVERT OPERATIONS; IT DOES NOT HAVE TO REPORT ON ALL THE MANY INQUIRIES IT MAKES OR PLANS TO MEET FUTURE CONTINGENCIES.

TURNER REITERATED THAT "I'M NOT OPPOSED TO TRYING TO OVERTHROW THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT WE SHOULD JUDGE WHETHER TO OVERTHROW ANY GOVERNMENT NOT BY ABSTRACT MORALITY; BUT BY WHICH GOVERNMENT IS BETTER; BOTH FOR THE UNITED STATES AND THE COUNTRY INVOLVED." LATER HE ADDED: "ESPECIALLY THE COUNTRY INVOLVED."

TODAY; HE SAID: "I DOUBT THERE IS ANY PRACTICAL WAY TO OVERTHROW THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT."

IN EL SALVADOR; HE STATED; THE UNITED STATES SHOULD BE SUPPORTING THE EXISTING GOVERNMENT AGAINST REBELS; WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PRESSURING THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.

BUT FOR PRESIDENT REAGAN TO INITIATE THE KIND OF COVERT ACTION HE DID IN CENTRAL AMERICA WAS "BOUND TO CAUSE TROUBLE;" HE ASSERTED. SINCE THE REQUIREMENT FOR CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT HAS EXISTED: "YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH SUCH CONTROVERSIAL ACTIONS" BECAUSE A "GENERAL CONSENSUS" OF SUPPORT IS NECESSARY.

U.S. IDENTIFICATION WITH THE SOMOZA REGIME AND ALLEGED SUPPORT OF EX-SOMOZISTAS TODAY "LIMITS OUR ABILITY TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE REALLY IMPORTANT COUNTRIES IN THE AREA: PANAMA AND MEXICO;" HE SAID.

TURNER SAID THAT "I GET VIBES FROM THE PRESS THAT SOMETHING IN THE HUNDREDS" (OF FORMER CIA COVERT OPERATIVES) HAVE BEEN CALLED BACK FOR CURRENT EFFORTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA. SOME OF THESE; HE INDICATED; WERE AMONG THE AGENTS HE FORCED OUT IN 1978 IN A CONTROVERSIAL CUTBACK OF THE AGENCY'S CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS STAFF.

HIS OWN FEELING; HE SAID; IS THAT THE NATION PAYS TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO ITS STRATEGIC NUCLEAR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE; AND NOT ENOUGH TO DEVELOPING A FORCE TO INTERVENE IN REMOTE AREAS. HE PREDICTED THAT WITHIN A DECADE IT IS "HIGHLY LIKELY" SUCH AN ABILITY WILL BE NEEDED IN THE MIDDLE EAST-PERSIAN

DISCUSSING THE UNSUCCESSFUL U.S. EFFORT IN 1980 TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES FROM TEHRAN, TURNER MAINTAINED THAT A 'HIGH-LEVEL PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION' STILL IS NEEDED TO INVESTIGATE WHY IT FAILED. IT IS 'TOO LATE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY,' HE CONCEDED, BUT SUCH AN INQUIRY SHOULD LOOK INTO SUCH QUESTIONS AS: ARE WE GETTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN OUR MILITARY? ARE WE UNABLE TO PLAN IN SECRECY? WHY DID MOUNTING SUCH AN EFFORT TAKE SO LONG?

ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF DIFFERENT GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE ABORTED HOSTAGE RESCUE MISSION, TURNER MAINTAINED THAT 'ON A SCALE OF 10, COMPARED TO THE OTHERS THE CIA RATED A 9.5 AND NOBODY ELSE HIGHER THAN A 5.'